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The Hohenzollern Before
the Throne of God

The Hohenzollern Before the Throne of God

by
James Dunne

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TO
DOCTOR ROBERT M. MCELROY
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
TO WHOM THE AUTHOR IS DEEPLY INDEBTED
FOR MANY AIDFUL SUGGESTIONS AND KIND ADVICE
THIS POEM
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED



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ARGUMENT

Having entered upon the Great War, which, from the Junker viewpoint, would bring to Germany a world-wide Supremacy ("Deutschland Uber Alles"); the Kaiser, bethinking him of his close relationship with the Almighty ("Me und Gott"); invoked His sovereign aid in a prayer which he caused to be offered up in the Evangelical churches of his Empire.

THE PRAYER

*Almighty and Merciful God; God of Armies, we beseech .
Thee, in humility, for Thy mighty aid for our German
Fatherland. Bless our entire German War Force; lead us to
Victory, and give us grace to be Christians towards our enemies
as well.*

Thus invoked, the Great-All-Father summons the royal suppliant before His throne, when the colloquy recorded in the poem takes place between Him and his self-proclaimed Vicegerent upon earth.

The Hohenzollern Before the Throne of God

"Summon the Hohenzollern before the throne of God!"

Thus spake the Great Archangel:

and, at his potent nod,

Gabriel, the Lord's Anointed flew down on shimmering wings;
And found the Kaiser dreaming in Potsdam's place of Kings;

"Arise thou Hohenzollern! The Lord God summons thee!"
And, swift before the mercy seat, he cried, on bended knee:

"I thank Thee, Heavenly Father! Thou heard'st my fervent prayer,
And brought my mighty legions beneath Thy fostering care;

"Under Thy sovereign guidance, like leaves before the wind,
Thy foes, and mine, shall scatter and leave no wrack behind!

"Then, Victor-crown'd, returning, with holiest thoughts aflame,
We'll build earth's noblest temples in Thy All-Hallowed Name!"

Then spake the Great-All Father:

"Thy prayer has reach'd my Throne;
But prayers like thine avail not, against the piercing moan,

"That, day and night, ascendeth from every battle plain,
From Liège to the Marne; from Verdun to Champagne!

"Think'st thou the Eye-all-seeing, that notes the sparrow's fall,
Sees not the slaughter'd millions on Earth's ensanguined ball;

"Notes not her turbid rivers, uprising to their flood;
Engulfing wounded thousands; encrimson'd with their blood!

"Think'st thou the Ear, attentive to every human sigh,
Hears not the mother's weeping, the infant's tender cry;

"Hears not the maiden's pleading against the fearful doom
Of exile, and defilement of girlhood's lovely bloom!

"What of My priesthood slaughter'd; what of My vestals slain?
And what of Rheims, the beautiful and what of old Louvain?

"Whose temples, lov'd of pilgrims,—(wherein the artist soul,
Enshrin'd its holiest dreamings,)—became the priceless toll,

"Thy barbarous hordes, outraging the towns of lovely France,
Did'st raze as sacred symbols of her glorious Renaissance!"

"But, Lord, they used Thy temples as watch-towers, that their shell
Should decimate my armies, like blasting fires from hell!

"And she, dead Edith Cavell, would liberate the foe
To war upon my people, and bring them bitterest woe;

"And ev'n Thy reverend priesthood, Thy Merciers, would inflame
The fires of racial hatred, and, in Thy Holy Name,

"Would call for direst vengeance, against my people's weal,
And circle all our frontiers, with barbs of glittering steel,

"Lest, to our suffering children, remote from warlike strife,
Should come from neutral nations, the succoring food of life!

"Thou knowest Heavenly Father! my labors did not cease,
To keep the wrangling nations within the bonds of peace;

"And safeguard all thy peoples from war's o'er-shadowing gloom."—
God spake:

"Cease, arch-blasphemer, and list thy dreadful doom!

"Accurs'd of men and angels, henceforth thou'rt deemed to weep,
Thro' days of bitterest anguish, thro' nights of feverous sleep;

"Cloth'd in their ghostly cerements, the sheeted dead shall rise
And flaunt their wounds a-gaping before thy 'wilder'd eyes;

"The thousands, maimed, and wounded from war's ensanguin'd fields,
Shall rise and gibber at thee till thy dark nature yields,

"To peals of hideous laughter, that thro' thy halls shall ring;
Which erst, with soul triumphant, thou paced as haughty King!

"What comfort then attends thee, that thy accurs'd horde
With demon-like elation put children to the sword?

"What boots it, that thy minions, fulfilling thy decree,
—Franc-tireurs of the upper air, fell pirates of the sea,—

"Above some quiet hamlet, with cowardly Zeppelins, sweep,
To slaughter babes and home-folk and murder peaceful sleep!

"What tho' thy lawless U-Boats, like deep-sea ghouls await,
The harmless ocean-trader; and, with a venomous hate,

"Let slip their deadly missiles, and to the ocean's bed,
Consign with fiendish laughter, the Lusitania's dead!

"In vain these ruthless slayings, in which thy Huns delight;
Conceiv'd in rankling hatred; wrought in revengeful spite!

"Such dastard crimes, thy people will evermore condone
Till thy mighty nation quivers from its centre to thy throne!

"Whene'er, in martial splendor, thy Huns commemorate
The triumphs of their legions, the glory of thy State,

"Unbidden guests will enter, moving with noiseless tread,
And 'mongst thy roystering feasters, the holy, martyr'd, dead ;—

"Whether from ocean-caverns where the Lusitania lies
Or quiet village graveyards—in ghostly shrouds shall rise,

"And point with bony finger to every bleeding pore,
Till, self-affrighted, trembling—their festal orgies o'er—

"Each, to his drowsy hamlet, reft of his baneful pride,
Shall wend his wavering footsteps—a spectre at his side."

Then pray'd the trembling War-Lord,

"Great God of Battles, heed,
"Thy servant's soulful pleading; and in his direst need,

"Thy countenance turn not from him, nor, in Thy wrath, withhold,
From all his suffering people thy favors manifold;

"Nay, rather hold my armies in Thy Almighty hand,
Till lasting peace shall circle the German Fatherland!"

"THY PEOPLE! AYE THY PEOPLE!

Know'st thou thy sins unshriven
Cry poignantly against them, before the bar of Heaven?

"With them lies thy dethroning; their's is the might to sway,
The potent rod of Empire, and sweep thy power away!

"Man's love of Freedom widens; man's love for Kingship wanes;
Dynasties and thrones vanish; but Humanity remains!

"Thy people! Aye thy people! Beware, thy direful fate,
When the German soul emerges from the bondage of the State!

"When to thy cheated millions war's hidden purpose comes;
And anguish'd hearts brood o'er it, far from the blare of drums!

"The rain of tears fast-falling, by countless thousands shed;
The wails of deepest mourning for their unnumber'd dead;

"The wide-spread, life-long sorrow, that thou can'st ne'er assuage,
The cries of orphan'd millions; the moanings of old age;—

"Shall, in their seething memories, as the sad years come and go,
Keep evermore before them, the Hohenzollern woe!"

Then wept the broken War-Lord, and, 'midst his falling tears,
He spoke—with dim forebodings of nearing, ominous, years,—

"Dear Lord! my German people still reverence me and mine,
And will not rise against me, unless thy wrath divine,

"Shall decimate my armies, and let the swarming foe
Sweep o'er our guarded frontiers, and lay our cities low!

"Avert, oh Heavenly Father, this dire, impending doom!
Plunge not my war-worn people in universal gloom!

"Let all their prayers ascending from every holy shrine,
Bring down Thy signal blessings, all-healing, and benign!"

Then from the throne eternal God spake in awful voice:—

"Dark sorcerer of evil, thou mad'st thy dreadful choice!

"To thee and to thy people, My peace on earth was given;
Ye chose war's dread arbitrament, and spurn'd the boon of Heaven!

"What gain attends thy choosing? What deeds of martial fame,
Have shed their envied lustre, around thy racial name?

"Crimes of the primal savage, crimes of the human ghoul;
All deeds that cry for vengeance, and lacerate the soul:—

"These were the grand achievings, for which thy heart did pine,
To crown the damning record, of thy Hohenzollern line!

"Learn, from thine own divining, thy racial course hath run,
While I set down before thee, the things that thou hast done!"

"Whose was the pre-war reckoning; the world-wide, conquering plan;
That kept the State transcendant; enslaved the soul of man?

"Whose were the mad blasphemings, that linked my Sacred Name,
With dreams of earthly dominance; with deeds of dark disfame?

"Whose were the lofty vauntings, by Heaven and men abhorr'd
That kept the world a-tremble, with the 'Chansons of thy Sword?'

"Hark, to the ribald rhymings, thy pagan bards outpour:—
Chants for the German Moloch, they worship and adore:—

*"I have slaughter'd the old and the sorrowful;
I have struck off the breasts of women;
I have run through the bodies of children
Who gazed at me with the eyes of a wounded lion!
It is meet and right, that I cry aloud in my pride,
For I am the flaming messenger of the Almighty!
Germany is so far above and beyond all nations
That, when she is happy, the whole world basks in smiles!
When she suffers, God, in His person, is rent with anguish!
Wrathful and avenging, he turns the waters into rivers of blood!"*

"Defaming thus His mercies, why should thy God withhold
The launching of His vengeance 'gainst all thy crimes enroll'd?

"List to the holier orisons, that nightly reach my throne;—
The soul of France is pleading in tenderest monotone;—

"For our sisters, the women of France! For France and our mothers!

I believe in God, in France, in Victory! I believe in beauty and youth and life!

*God guard me to the very end; but if my blood is needed,
For France's triumph; Thy will be done, oh Lord!"*

"The pure of heart thus prayeth; but thy remorseless soul
Would'st trample all the virtues, to reach thy crowning goal!

"Supreme among the nations from thy Imperial throne,—
(The will of all earth's peoples, subservient to thine own,)—

"Thou'dst fulminate thy thunderings, and wave thy potent rod
As one who ruleth mankind, in solemn league with God!

"Thus, in mine anger, hast thou kindled a quenchless flame,
That evermore shall shrivel the Hohenzollern name!

"With all thy shatter'd dreamings of world-wide dominance:—
(Belgium thy conquer'd vassal, thy thrall, dismember'd France;

"England, thy mightiest rival, should thy stern vengeance feel;
And Columbia's free-born millions should cringe beneath thy heel;—)

"What comfort now awaits thee? What hopes are now thine own?
Hear'st thou the ominous rumblings, beneath thy tottering throne?

"Purg'd from its lust of conquest, thy mighty nation reels
Half-waken'd from its torpor, while all the eternal wheels

"Of Fate and Change, are whirring, and from Time's fruitful womb,
Shall come th' impending edict, that seals thy dreadful doom!

"Pilloried before thy people, in their concentrated hate,
Thou shalt go forth unenvied, and excommunicate;

"The Cross, the Star, the Order, of thy proud House and Name,
Shall shine as glistening symbols of thy entailed disfame!

"Outlaw'd abhorr'd, accursèd, the issue of thy Race;
Shorn of their fancied birthright; their princely power and place;

"Shall, in their life-long exile find slow sad years to mourn,
Thy people's final mandate of "NEVER TO RETURN!"

Then, from the throne descending, the sorrowing War-Lord heard,
The solemn chant of Angels, that all his being stirr'd:—

*"Hohenzollern, where is thy throne? It is gone in the wind!
Germany, where is thy might? It is gone in the wind?"*

*Like the swift shadows of Noon, like the dreams of the Blind;
Vanish'd thy glories and pomps! They are gone in the wind!"*

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